



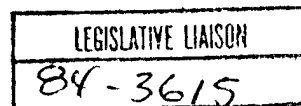
United States
**Office of
Personnel Management**

Federal Executive Institute
1301 Emmet Street
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901 2899
804-296-0181 (FTS 938-1295)

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In Reply Refer To

Your Reference



Mr. Charles Briggs
Director, Office of
Legislative Liaison
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, DC 20505

Chrono

Dear Chuck:

A belated warm thank-you for the excellent program that you and your colleagues put on for my foreign policy seminar on August 24. [redacted] and Fritz Earmarth did excellent jobs of discussing the Agency's functions and products, and you were superb in giving us insights into the Agency's relations with Congress during this crucial period when the country is deciding the intensity of the U.S. national interests in Central America. I am also indebted to [redacted] and your Training Staff for excellent logistics and planning. Our Federal officials came away with a real appreciation of the Agency's functions and caliber of personnel.

You may be interested in the enclosed article of mine that was published recently in The World Today (Chatham House, London) entitled: "The Widening Atlantic: NATO at Another Crossroads." A longer version will appear in the September issue of the Foreign Service Journal (which I don't have yet), but this will give you the thrust of my view on U.S.-European relations in the coming years.

Sincerely yours,

Donald E. Nuechterlein
Professor of International Affairs

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The widening Atlantic: Nato at another crossroads

DONALD NUECHTERLEIN

FOR those who live in free societies, George Orwell's gloomy predictions about the nature of existence in 1984 have proved to be unfounded. When he wrote in the early post-1945 period, he had good reason to be pessimistic: Europe lay in ruins, Britain was the only democracy to survive Hitler's massive onslaught on western civilisation, and the political mood in western Europe bordered on desperation. In Italy and France, Communist parties came close to achieving dominant power through the electoral process and general strikes; Britain, Orwell believed, would eventually succumb to an authoritarian mode of government led by the far left of the British Labour Party.

Three and a half decades later none of this has occurred, and western

The author is Professor of International Affairs at the Federal Executive Institute in Charlottesville, Virginia. He has published several books on American foreign policy. His forthcoming book, *America Overcommitted: US National Interests in the 1980s*, is to be published by the University Press of Kentucky. Professor Nuechterlein contributed an article on convergence and divergence in the North Atlantic relationship to the May 1983 issue of *The World Today*.

Europe's democracies are probably stronger than at any time in the twentieth century. The Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain have renounced fascism in favour of parliamentary democracy, and no nation in western Europe has seriously contemplated turning over political power to an indigenous Communist party. All of them have become more prosperous economically than at any time in their history. Why, then, are Europeans pessimistic about the future?

At root, Europe's unease and foreboding result from a perception that people and governments are not in charge of their destiny and that a major war will occur and destroy the gains made since 1945. This is a relatively new phenomenon. During the 1950s and 1960s, Europeans believed there was little likelihood that war would occur because the United States held a clear superiority of power—especially in the field of nuclear weapons—and it was therefore assumed that the Soviet leadership would not risk its own destruction by launching an attack westward. Even in the 1970s when there was nuclear parity between the Soviet Union and the United States, Europeans did not fear war because the superpowers had concluded a strategic arms limitation agreement and were launching an era of détente in their political and economic relations. Movement towards détente between the superpowers had begun in the late 1960s and seemed to be firmly established in the Helsinki accords of 1975. This feeling of confidence about the future came to an abrupt halt in 1979, however. Five years later we find deep concern on both sides of the Atlantic about the possibility of war and the use of nuclear weapons.

There are three reasons, I believe, for the sharp change of mood since 1979. First, the Iranian crisis led the European and American governments to draw different conclusions about the Soviet threat to the Persian Gulf area, and what should be done about it. Second, Soviet deployment of theatre (intermediate-range) nuclear missiles (SS-20s) aimed at west European cities caused European governments to worry about nuclear intimidation by the Kremlin. They therefore asked a sceptical United States to build and thereafter deploy similar weapons in western Europe.¹ Third, American political leadership was criticised in western Europe for being either inept in dealing with the superpower relationship (during the Carter Administration) or too bellicose and thus dangerous in managing European security (during Ronald Reagan's tenure). Let us examine these factors.

The fall of the Shah of Iran in January 1979 had a profound impact on the regional power balance in the Middle East and South-West Asia. Some Europeans and Americans thought the Carter Administration could have prevented the collapse of the pro-western government there and its replacement by a hostile Islamic regime headed by Ayatollah Khomeini. Others believed that even if the Shah were ousted, there remained a good possibility that a moderate government might emerge that would be nationalistic but not anti-western. The central issue, however, was the policy of the United States government after the Khomeini regime accepted responsibility for imprison-

¹ For background, see David S. Yost, 'START, INF and European Security', *The World Today*, November 1983.

NATO

323

ing 52 American Embassy personnel in November 1979, and after the Soviet Union sent its forces into Afghanistan a few weeks later to put down a recalcitrant Marxist government.

Europeans and Americans drew different conclusions from these events. European governments, by and large, urged the Carter Administration to show restraint in dealing with Iran and the Soviet Union. From a European perspective, the taking of American hostages by a revolutionary government in Iran was unfortunate, but no cause for war or other military action. The invasion of Afghanistan could be understood, many Europeans said, as a Soviet attempt to deal with an unstable country on the Soviet Union's doorstep and constituting a security threat to 50-60 million Soviet Moslems living across the border. Political and some economic pressure, not a military buildup in the Indian Ocean, was the way many European political leaders thought Carter should respond to the Soviet military move into Afghanistan.

President Carter ruled out a military response to the Iranian seizure of American diplomats and adopted severe economic and political sanctions against the Khomeini regime. He also imposed an embargo on grain sales to the Soviet Union to show displeasure over the invasion of Afghanistan. Europeans were reluctant to adopt economic sanctions because of their need for Iranian oil and exports to Iran. They were also unwilling, particularly the government in Bonn, to agree to trade sanctions against the Soviet Union and eastern Europe; but they went along with political gestures such as withdrawal from the Moscow Olympic Games in 1980. President Carter, under increasing pressure at home to exhibit toughness instead of prayers on behalf of the hostages and military power instead of political posturing in response to the Soviet buildup in Afghanistan, decided on a military rescue mission in Iran and a naval show of strength in the Indian Ocean. The ill-fated rescue mission in April 1980 caused great unease in Europe because it demonstrated that Mr Carter had become desperate for an end to the hostage crisis and might therefore use force against Iran.

The expansion of American military power in the Indian Ocean was not criticised by European governments, but neither was there much inclination to identify with growing American concern for the deteriorating political situation in South-West Asia, for example, by sending European naval and air units there. Indeed, President Carter's declaration in January 1980, in his State of the Union Message to Congress, that the Persian Gulf area was a 'vital interest' of the United States and would be defended by American forces if necessary, caused great unease in European capitals because it raised the prospect of war in the Middle East and the likely interruption of Europe's vital oil supply. American official opinion, on the other hand, was moving steadily in the direction of tougher measures, including military moves, to deal with the Iranian government and warn the Soviet Union not to be tempted to use force in the Persian Gulf region. European fears were heightened in the summer of 1980 when Ronald Reagan became the Republican nominee for President and promised to rebuild American prestige around the world after what he described as its ruinous decline during the 1970s.

The second factor which changed the generally optimistic mood of Europeans about their security situation emerged in 1981-2 when the time approached to implement a 1979 decision of Nato to deploy theatre nuclear weapons. This triggered a massive and sometimes a violent response from European 'peace' groups and great unease among a majority of the people. It is useful to recall that the proposal to match the Soviet SS-20 deployment with a Nato Euromissile was initiated by European leaders (specifically West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt) out of concern that an American President could not realistically be expected to counter a Soviet missile threat to European cities with strategic weapons launched from the United States. Although American military planners were convinced that a Soviet nuclear attack on western Europe would be met with a submarine-launched nuclear retaliation on Soviet territory—thus maintaining nuclear deterrence—President Carter agreed to build Pershing II mobile missiles for deployment in West Germany and to install ground-launched cruise missiles in Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium as well as West Germany. European and American leaders agreed that actual deployment of these theatre nuclear weapons would depend on the outcome of further talks between the United States and the Soviet Union to limit, and perhaps reduce, the number and types of nuclear weapons each side would build in the 1980s. There was an assumption that the SALT II treaty, negotiated by the Carter Administration, would be ratified by the American Senate.

When it became clear to Europeans in 1981-2 that a new arms limitation agreement between the superpowers was unlikely to be achieved and that the United States would go ahead with deployment of Pershing II and cruise missiles, the reality of the 1979 Nato decision burst upon Europeans like a thunderstorm. Instead of feeling more secure in the knowledge that the deployment of Euromissiles would diminish Moscow's ability to intimidate their governments with the SS-20, the projected deployment of Pershing and cruise missiles in the autumn of 1983 brought forth protests from people in all European countries except France (which has its own nuclear deterrent and decided not to use American missiles). The massive anti-nuclear movements in Germany, Britain and Holland were aided by skilful Soviet propaganda which painted Soviet missiles as benign self-defence weapons, while depicting similar American weapons as war-like and dangerous for European security. Left-wing and some moderate opinion in Europe viewed the United States, not the Soviet Union, as the principal threat to peace because of its intention to implement the 1979 decision to match Soviet deployments. The anti-nuclear movement in West Germany succeeded in March 1983 in electing a small block of representatives (the Green Party) to the Bundestag, and by the end of the year the German Social Democratic Party had decided to shift its pro-defence policy and adopt an anti-nuclear statement as part of its platform. Similarly in Britain, the peace movement caused the Labour Party to change course and adopt an anti-nuclear programme—directed not only against American nuclear forces in Britain but also against Britain's independent nuclear deterrent.

NATO

325

Reaction in the United States to these events was one of bewilderment. Although a nuclear-freeze movement (not abandonment of nuclear weapons) had gained considerable support in 1982-3 and resulted in Bills being considered in Congress, there was little public support for an abandonment of the nuclear deterrent policy and the weapons to support it. Even American Roman Catholic Bishops, who came close to calling for the scrapping of nuclear weapons in a pastoral letter in 1983, received little public support for their view. In American conservative and moderate circles, however, the impact of the anti-nuclear movement in Europe had an unsettling effect.

On the one hand, Reagan Administration policymakers seemed dismayed that the United States was being painted by Europeans as the villain threatening their homeland with destruction, while they saw the United States as reducing the likelihood of war because the Euromissiles would improve Nato's deterrent capability. Many American political leaders were astonished in 1983 to find the Soviet Union making inroads into the moderate European thinking and nudging it toward neutralism and pacifism. Belated efforts by Washington to show flexibility on the number of Pershings and cruise missiles it might be prepared to deploy, in exchange for Soviet concessions on the number of SS-20s deployed, lowered the temperature of public debate only marginally in Europe. That debate also strengthened the American conservatives' belief that western Europe was 'going soft' and was no longer interested to oppose the Soviet threat. Even moderate American opinion, especially west of the eastern states, wondered whether it was worthwhile to keep 350,000 American servicemen and their equipment in Europe if the Europeans preferred to accommodate to Soviet power.

The third factor—negative European views of American political leadership—was already apparent in the late 1960s and 1970s; but it became a serious political issue after the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency in November 1980. Whereas Americans voted in that election for stronger leadership in foreign policy than that exhibited by President Carter, Europeans were astonished that a man who had never served in Washington and held what they believed to be extreme views would now exercise the power of life and death over them. The image of Reagan as a 'trigger-happy Hollywood cowboy' was carefully nurtured by Soviet propaganda, and his strong speeches to conservative political groups were taken as policy statements about American government intentions. Little was reported in Europe about his eight years as Governor of California, the largest state in the union, during which he displayed remarkable skills for compromise and seeing the reality of situations—despite his conservative rhetoric. Many thoughtful Europeans failed to recognise that the United States had neglected the modernisation of its defence forces during the 1970s and that Ronald Reagan's election signalled a public recognition that national security depended on a strong and confident United States. This is not to say that many Americans, like Europeans, were not surprised by some of the strong anti-Soviet and anti-Communist speeches made by Reagan and some of his key lieutenants; but Americans more than Europeans recognised the distinction between the President's rhetoric and his

actions. For example, during the crisis in Poland, where the Soviet Union felt its security was threatened, Reagan did not press this issue to the point where revolution might have broken out and spilled into other east European countries.

The real problem in Atlantic relations today is the correct European assessment that President Reagan is not interested in détente with the Soviet Union on the basis of conditions that prevailed in the 1970s. There may be a fundamental divergence in American and European views on this issue, and if not resolved soon this erosion of consensus in basic Allied interests could result in a withering of the North Atlantic alliance. Stated bluntly, a majority of the American people are not willing to accept a military and political accommodation with the Soviet Union if this means Moscow has a free hand to support revolutions throughout the world and to use political intimidation and trade to undermine the resolve of the west to maintain a strong military alliance. Conversely, a new generation of Europeans has emerged since the Second World War that is simply not prepared to limit its postwar economic and social gains either by spending more on defence or by risking Soviet displeasure over Nato's policies. American opinion across the board has hardened since 1979 in its view of the Soviet Union while European opinion has tended towards accommodation with the Soviet Union—at least on maintaining trade and cultural ties.

Disagreements over American policy towards Iran, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan and the deployment of Euromissiles are, therefore, not the main issues in the Nato relationship; the fundamental issue is whether to confront the Soviet Union over its arms buildup and aggressive behaviour or, instead, accommodate Soviet superiority in military power and influence in Europe. Nato very likely would have faced this problem today even if Jimmy Carter had been re-elected American President, because the American policy during the last year of his Administration was moving towards a large American defence buildup and a much tougher policy towards the Soviet Union. It should be remembered that Carter had an even more ambitious programme than Reagan for building and deploying the huge MX missile as a means of matching Soviet gains in land-based inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). The central problem in the transatlantic relationship, then, is not the specific President who occupies the White House but the growing divergence in American and European public attitudes about how to deal with the Soviet Union and maintain the security and freedom of western Europe.

The outlook for the Atlantic alliance is, therefore, not as favourable as it was five years ago. Indicative of the trend was a proposal made in the American Congress by Senator Sam Nunn in June to cut American troop strengths in Europe if the European governments do not provide more conventional arms for Nato defences. Although defeated, the measure won wide support among American lawmakers. Unless European and American leaders are able to reduce the growing divergence in public attitudes on Nato defence policy, 1985 may present the alliance with a crisis that could shatter 40 years of peace, prosperity and confidence in the future.